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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that women do not receive occupational rewards commensurate with their achievement, rewards that are allocated to equally qualified men. The analysis of discrimination is directed toward 3 problems: (1) to what extent are women denied occupational rewards that, according to achievement ideology, they have legitimately earned; (2) what are the demographic and occupational distributions of reward inequalities among working women; and (3) to what extent are the researcher's objective measures of discrimination associated with reports of perceived discrimination. Data were obtained from a survey of American workers conducted by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan late in 1969. Results showed that the average working woman received $3,458 less than her male counterpart. In regard to demographic and occupational variables that are related to severity of discrimination, it was found that the women who lost $3,500 or more were the youngest (16-29 years old) and the oldest (55 years plus). (Author/RK)

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Women in the Occupational World[1]

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Paying women less than men is easily justified. Justifications vary, but they often include the claim that women are more likely to be sick, to be absentees, and to quit their jobs. Aside from the factual errors in these claims (Dornbusch, 1966), the form of the argument illustrates a critical but often neglected point: discrimination is usually justified by reference to a particular ideology or set of values. Most often, an achievement ideology is used to justify differential payment, and the argument goes as follows: unequal pay is legitimate when there is unequal achievement. Since women achieve less, it is legitimate, not discriminatory, to pay them less. Of course, adherence to this ideology should mean that women who achieve as much as men receive equal occupational rewards.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that women do not receive occupational rewards commensurate with their achievement, rewards that are allocated to equally qualified men. Rather, women experience occupational discrimination, discrimination being defined here as the provision of fewer rewards or facilities than are legitimately deserved. Although occupational sex discrimination, particularly among professional women, has been well documented (Austin, 1969; Epstein, 1970;

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CG 006 709

Mattfeld and Van Aken, 1965), this study is unique in that the data are drawn from a national probability sample of currently employed workers, female and male, in a variety of occupations. The findings are thus generalizable to the population of American working women and men. Still another feature of this research is that we have developed measures to detect individual differences in the amount of discrimination encountered. Discrimination is usually inferred by examining group differences. For example, evidence of discrimination against blacks is gathered by comparing occupational or economic differences between blacks and whites (Batchelder, 1968; Kahn, 1968; Ross, 1967). With the data reported in this paper, we are able to carry out more intensive studies to assess the conditions associated with different degrees of discrimination.

Our analysis of discrimination is directed toward three problems: first, to what extent are women denied occupational rewards that, according to an achievement ideology, they have legitimately earned? Specification of some ideology or set of values is necessary to distinguish legitimate from discriminatory differentiation. In our society, and particularly in the economic domain, the achievement ideology is dominant and pervasive. We therefore chose it as the framework within which to study occupational sex discrimination, a choice that does not necessarily indicate adherence to this set of values. There are other, alternative ideologies. For example, Marxist writings describe a need ideology, according to which rewards ought to be based on need, rather than on performance. The

second research problem was to discover the demographic and occupational distributions of reward inequalities among working women. Third, we explored the extent to which our objective measures of discrimination were associated with reports of perceived discrimination. A more complete statement of the research problems, the method and its limitations, and our results can be found in a forthcoming article by Levitin, Quinn and Staines.

Data were obtained from a survey of American workers conducted by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan late in 1969. The research was supported by a contract with the Employment Standards Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor. The interpretations and viewpoints presented here do not necessarily represent the official position or policy of the Department of Labor.

The principle aims of the survey were to determine some of the problems workers face, to develop measures of job satisfaction and mental health, and to assess the effects of working conditions on both job satisfaction and mental health. Basic univariate and bivariate tables are available elsewhere (Quinn, et al., 1970). This analysis represents a preliminary part of a forthcoming report on the status of working women.

The sample was a national probability sample of persons who were living in households, were 16 years old or older, and were working for pay 20 hours a week or more. Unemployed members of the labor force and those outside the labor force were thus excluded. All eligible workers were interviewed in each of the sampled households, and every worker in the population had an equal probability of being selected. The

full sample included 539 women and 933 men. For the present analysis, three groups of workers were excluded: self-employed workers, part-time workers, defined as those working less than 35 hours a week, and workers who were seasonally or irregularly employed during the year. School teachers were not regarded as being irregularly employed. The remaining sample consisted of 351 women and 695 men. For some analyses, the sample of men was further randomly divided into two half-samples.

Following an analysis begun last year by Graham Staines, Rob Quinn, Graham Staines and I chose two measures of occupational rewards: total annual income from the worker's primary job before taxes or other deductions and the overall quality of working conditions. The latter is measured by a Quality of Work Index, a summary index assessing such areas as income, health and safety, work hours, transportation to and from work, interpersonal relations on the job, job security, and the content of the worker's job. Details of how this and other indices were constructed, tested for reliability, and utilized may be found in the already mentioned report of univariate and bivariate tables (Quinn, et al., 1970) and in forthcoming reports.

We also chose several measures of merit or performance that, according to an achievement ideology, ought to predict to different levels of these two occupational rewards. We had no objective criteria to assess each person's past or anticipated performance, such as units produced per hour; nor, given the occupational heterogeneity of the sample, could we expect to have any. Thus, the six predictor variables chosen were

only indirect indicators of performance or achievement. These six predictor variables were education, tenure with one's employer, tenure on one's specific job with that employer; number of hours worked each week; amount of supervisory responsibility; and occupational prestige as measured by the Duncan scale (Reiss, et al., 1961). The choice of appropriate indicators of achievement was somewhat arbitrary, reflecting our understanding of the achievement ideology. For example, whether or not job tenure is an appropriate factor for determining income depends upon how tenure is conceptualized. It was decided to assume that longer tenure may lead to the acquisition of additional experience and skills and thereby constitutes an appropriate basis for assigning occupational rewards.

Objective sex discrimination was then defined as the difference between how much each woman was rewarded and how much she ought to have been rewarded based on her scores on the six achievement predictor variables. To obtain a measure of objective discrimination, the assumption was made that occupational sex discrimination was not operative for men. Multiple regressions were calculated on a random half-sample of men to determine the optimal weighting of these six achievement variables in predicting both reward measures for men. The obtained weights were used to compute <u>expected</u> values on the two occupational reward measures for both the sample of women and the second random half-sample of men. The measure of objective discrimination was computed by substracting the expected value from the observed value of an occupational reward for each respondant, with scale units in dollars for

annual income and on a 1-5 scale for the Quality of Work Index.

Although we expected to discover that a woman received less occupational reward than a man with identical scores on the achievement predictors, we were hardly prepared for the size of the discrepancy between observed and expected annual income. The average woman actually received $3,458 (SD=$2,200; N=323) less than her male counterpart--therefore $3,458 less than she should have received. Another way to state this result is to note that the median woman would have to receive 71 percent more than her current income to make that income equivalent to a man with the same scores on the predictor variables.

Figure 1 shows graphically the distribution of total annual income discrepancies for all women and the second random half-sample of men. Fifty and three-tenths percent of the women had annual income discrepancies ranging from $3,000 through $5,999. The mean annual income of 94.9 percent of the women was less than the amount they should have received on the basis of the achievement criteria.

Sex differences in the distribution of the discrepancy scores on the Quality of Work Index were less extreme than those based on annual income. Nevertheless, 55 percent of the women had scores lower than their predicted scores. This result indicated that the quality of women's occupations was less than would have been expected from their achievement scores.

To discover which demographic and occupational variables were related to severity of discrimination, we dichotomized the

sample of women into those who lost $3,500 or more in income and those who lost less. Briefly, the significant differences were that the women who lost $3,500 or more were the youngest (16-29 years old) and the oldest (55 years or more) of the respondents. They were also white collar workers; those employed in professional, technical, managerial, clerical, and sales work; those who did not belong to a union; and those in comparatively small establishments where less than 500 employees worked. However, there were no significant associations between severity of discrimination in reference to the Quality of Work Index and any of the selected demographic and occupational variables.

Clearly, almost all women were discriminated against with regard both to their income and to the quality of their jobs, but only 7.9 percent reported differential treatment when asked, "Do you feel in <u>any</u> way discriminated against on your job because you are a women?" Thus, our objective measure of discrimination was virtually unrelated to perceived or reported discrimination.

Time constraints permit only a brief discussion of these results. The data clearly point to large discrepancies between the occupational rewards women earned and the occupational rewards they received in comparison to rewards allocated to equally qualified men.

The achievement ideology is simply not equally applied to women and men, with 94.9 percent of the women being underpaid for their skills and their performance, underpaid, on the average, $3,458 a year.

The argument is often made that even though women earn less than equally qualified men, this difference is offset by the better working conditions supposedly enjoyed by women. Whether or not a woman would be willing to trade a mean loss in annual income of $3,500 for better working conditions, more fringe benefits or other non-economic aspects of a job is an empirical question not tested here. What is clear from these data, however, is the fact that women were not receiving better quality jobs than would have been predicted from their performance. While there was ample evidence of income discrimination, there was no evidence of "compensating" favoritism in terms of the quality of the job. In fact, just the opposite was true: women not only received lower pay, but they also had worse jobs than equally qualified men, worse than they ought to have had based on their achievement.

We have only presented first order associations between discrimination and the demographic and occupational variables. The discrepancy scores reflect all forms of illegitimate or discriminatory differentiation, including age and race as well as sex discrimination. Thus, we are now preparing to analyze the data further to try to separate sex from other kinds of discrimination.

Most bemusing is the fact that only 7.9 percent of the women reported on-the-job discrimination. No satisfactory answer as to why this figure is so low suggests itself, but reasons may include the following: Women may not know what equivalently qualified men are payed elsewhere, especially in other occupations. They may attribute some of the disparity to factors they regard as legitimate. They may compare

themselves to other women rather than to men. They may believe that, in principle, women and men should receive unequal occupational rewards. They may attribute discrimination to factors such as age and race rather than to sex. Or, they may restrict the term discrimination to instances in which discrimination is consciously planned and executed by some organizational decision-maker. We have no adequate explanation. However, the lack of a relationship between perceived and objective discrimination may be quite time-bound. Many political and social action groups are helping women become increasingly conscious of the discrimination they face and less tolerant of inequitable treatment.

Thus, it is quite possible that there will be a substantial future increase in the number of women reporting discrimination on their jobs--discrimination that the present study indicates they have every right to report.

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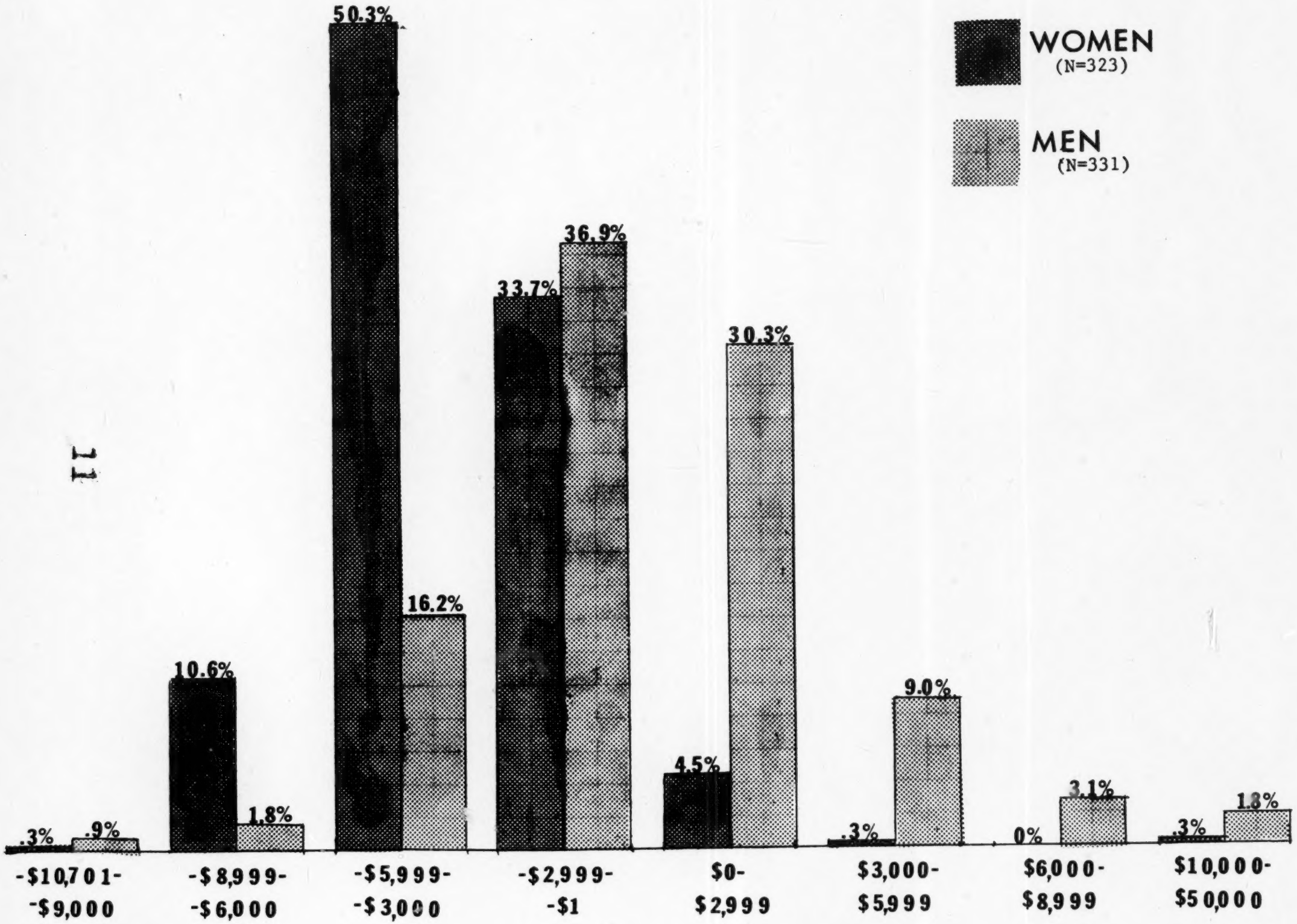
Figure 1.
Percentage Distribution of Total Annual Income
Discrepancies for Women and Second Random Half-sample of Men



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